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Röckert

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[54] **SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATING UNITS AND A METHOD IN SAID SYSTEM**

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[22] Filed: **Oct. 15, 1997**

[57] ABSTRACT

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** **455/453; 455/445; 455/560;**
370/351; 370/356

[58] **Field of Search** 455/445, 453,
455/422, 517, 560; 370/216, 217, 218,
238, 351, 352, 355, 356

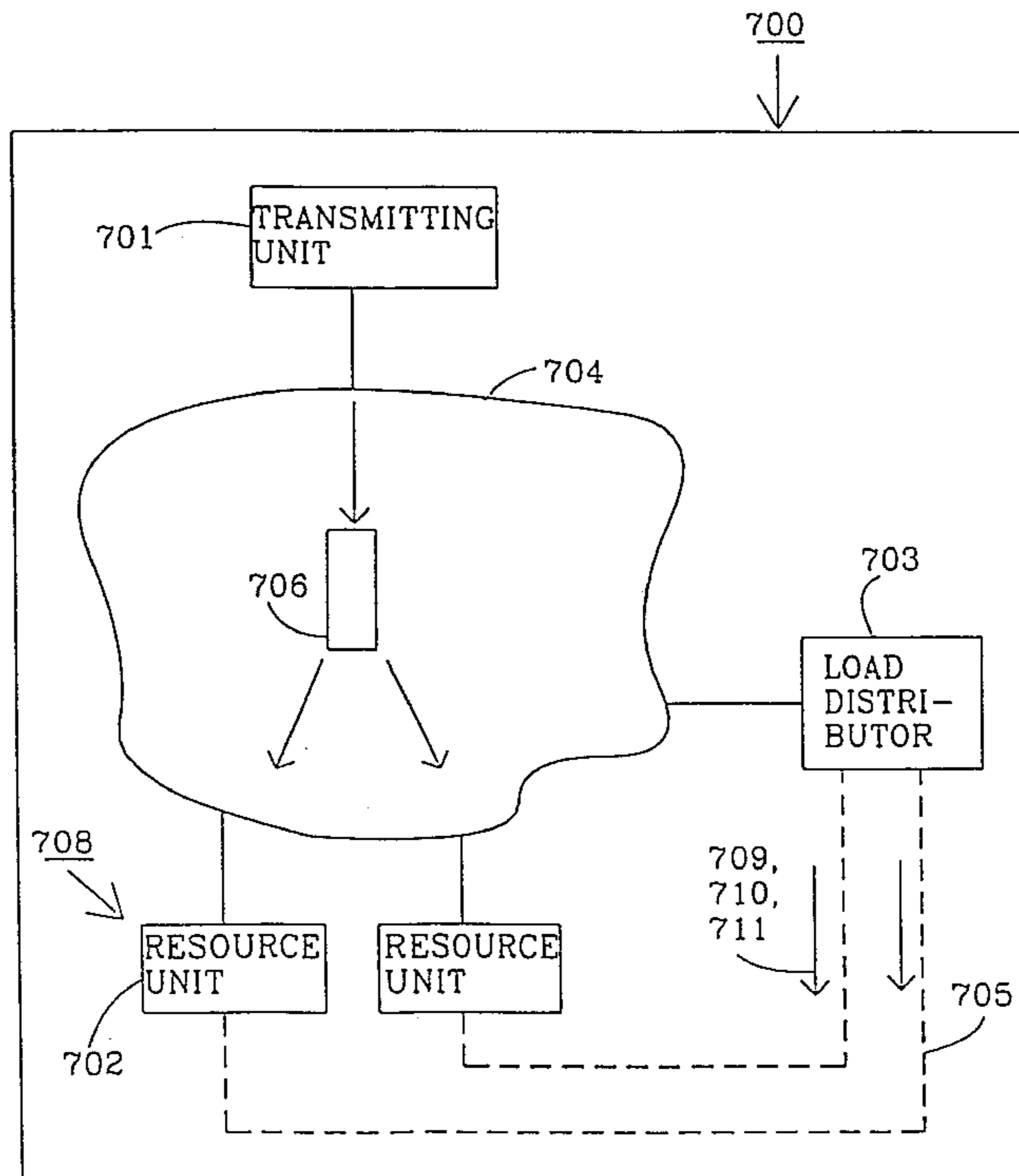
In a system (BS2) of communicating units a message (308) is transmitted from a transmitting unit (301) to a resource group comprising at least two resource units (303). The content of the message (308) is to be handled by one of the resource units 303. The invention solves the problem of achieving a desired load distribution over the resource units (303) without delay or congestion. The message (308) is transmitted to all resource units (303), causing all units to start receiving the message (308). A load distributor (304) selects one of the resource units (303) to handle the message (308) and the other resource units (303) interrupt the reception. The system may be, for example, a base station (BS2) connected to an exchange in a mobile communication system, the transmitting unit being a transceiver unit (301) and the resource units being X.25 units (303) handling X.25 links (103) for communication with the exchange. The transceiver unit (301) transmits a message (308) to all the X.25 units (303). The X.25 unit (303) selected by the load distributor (304) forwards the content of the message (308) to the exchange, while the other X.25 units (303) ignore the content of the message (308).

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26 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



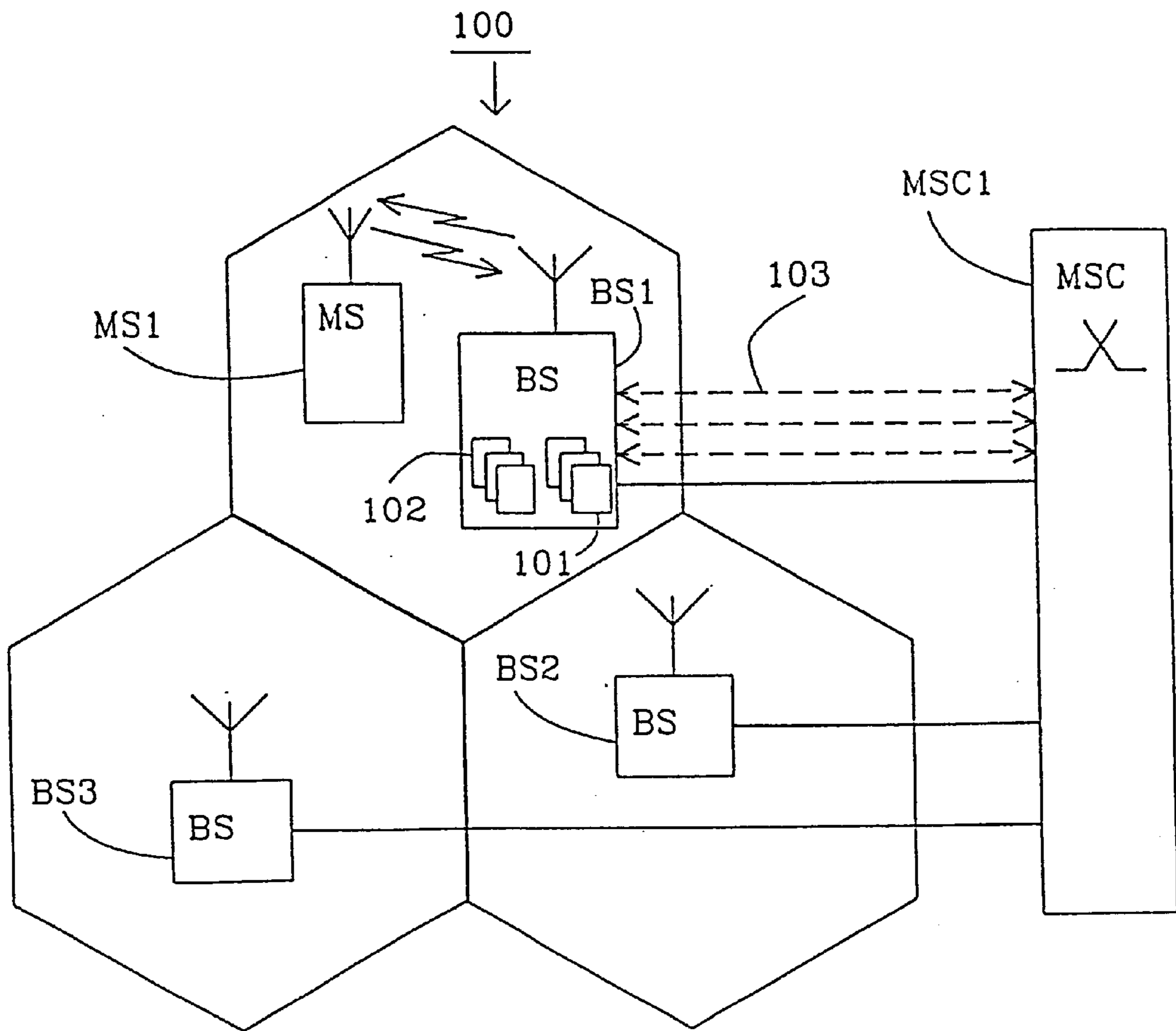


Fig. 1

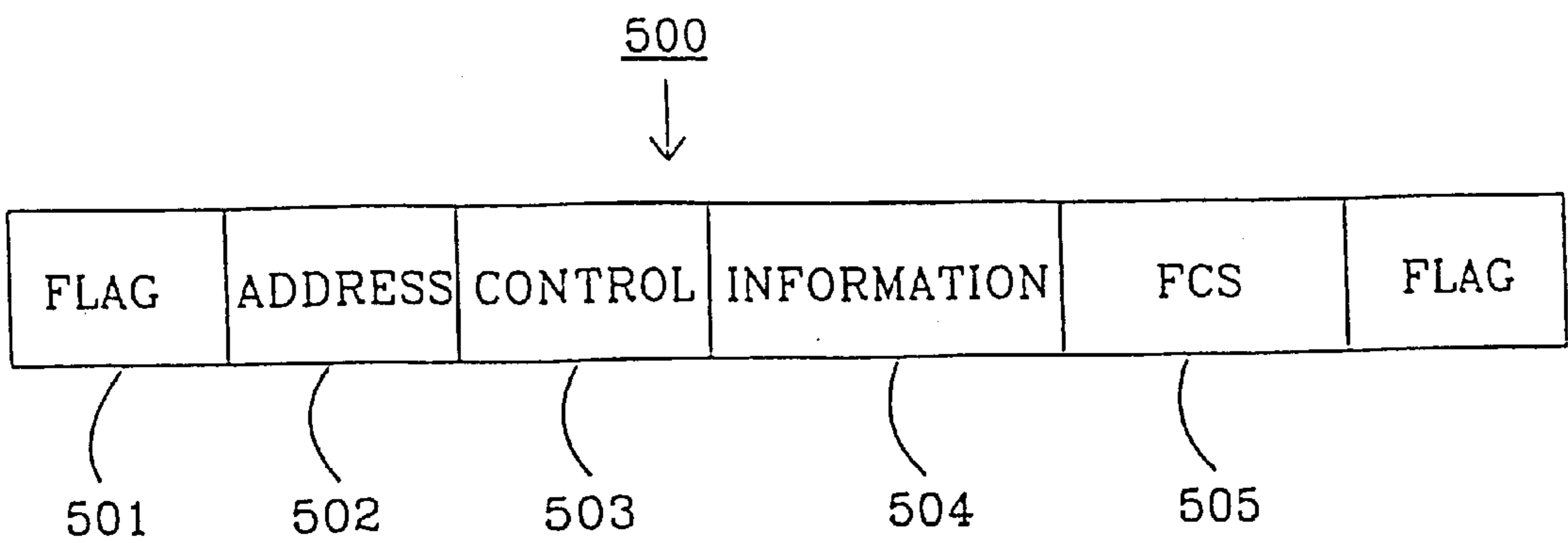


Fig. 5

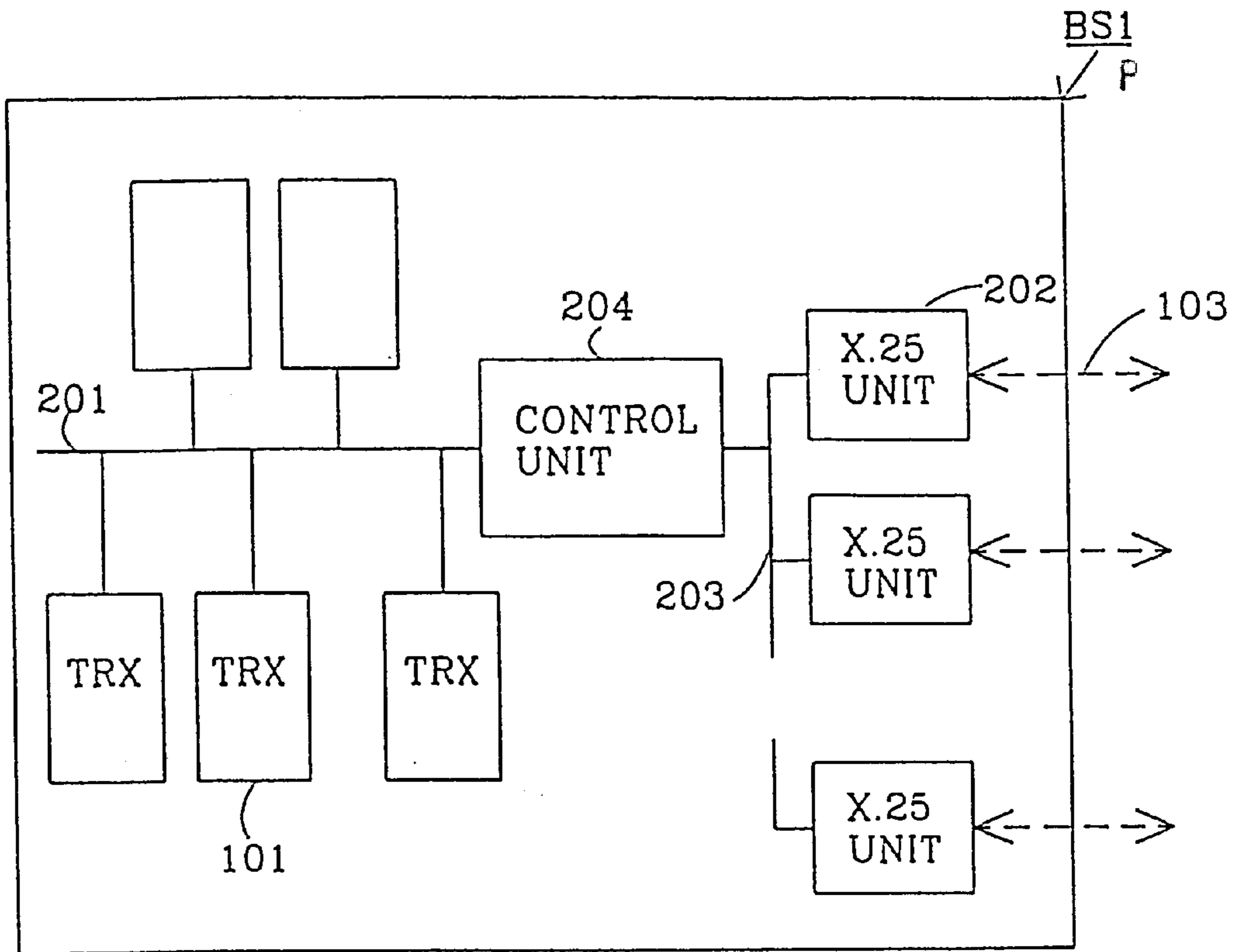


Fig. 2

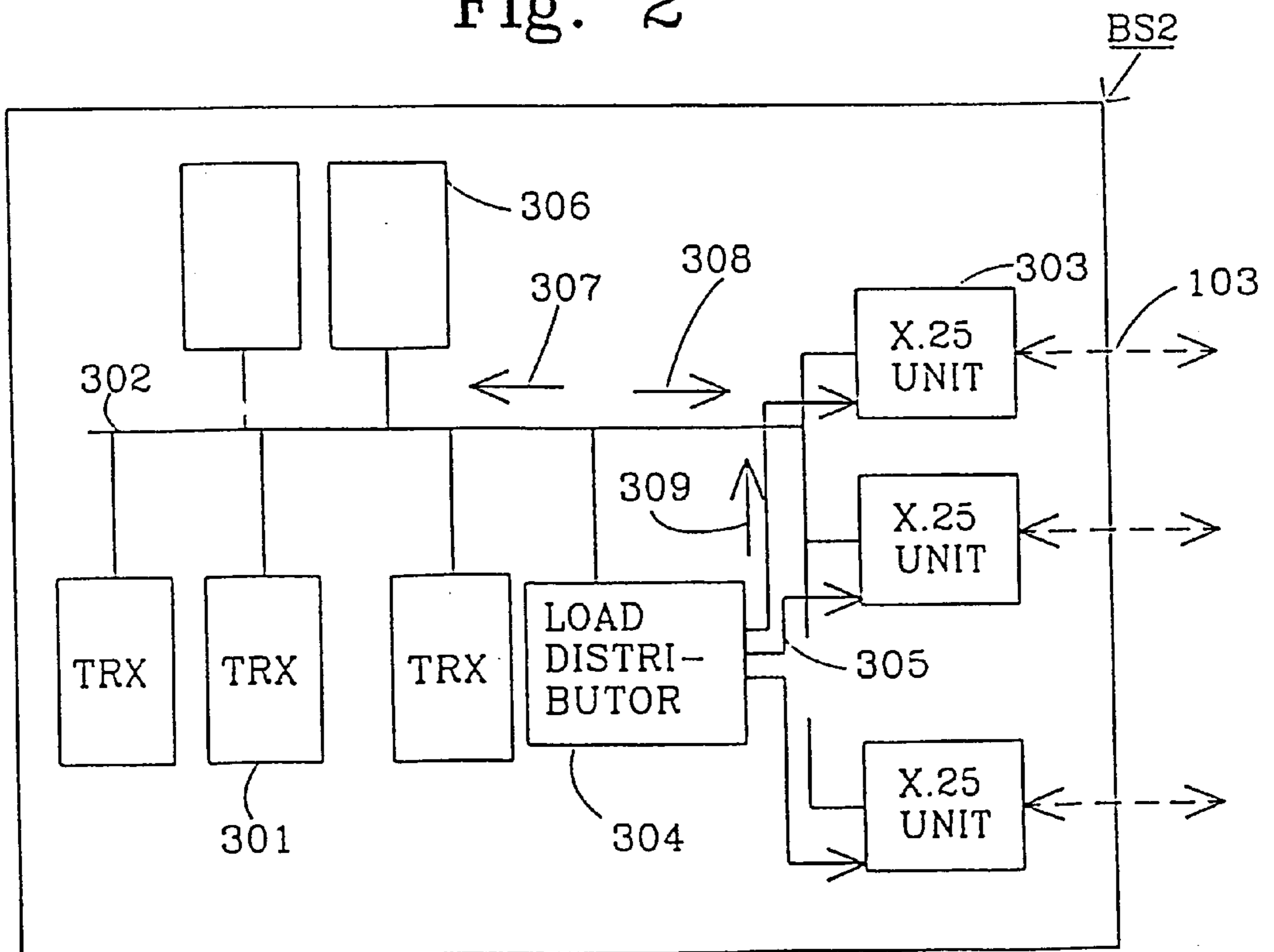


Fig. 3

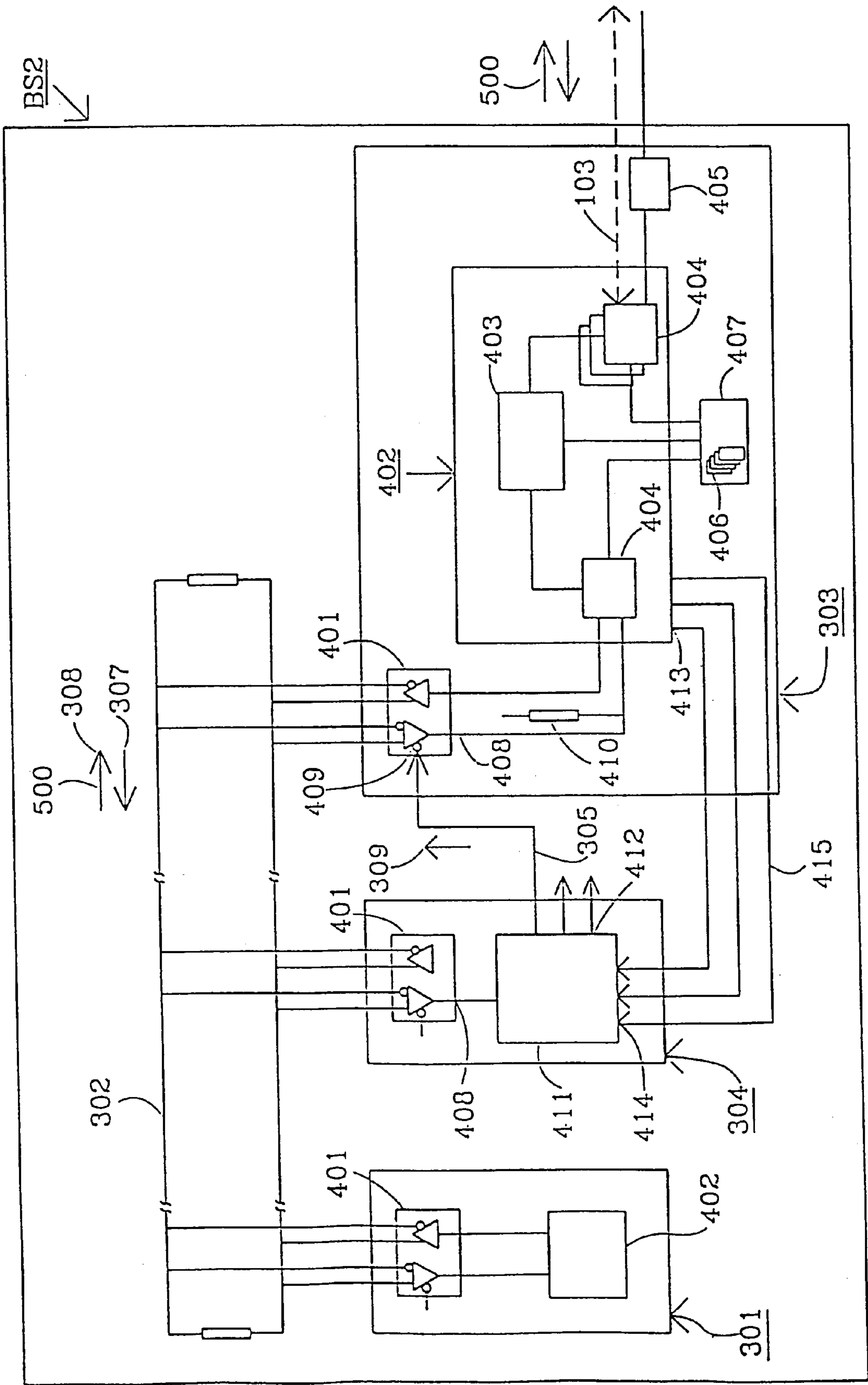


Fig. 4

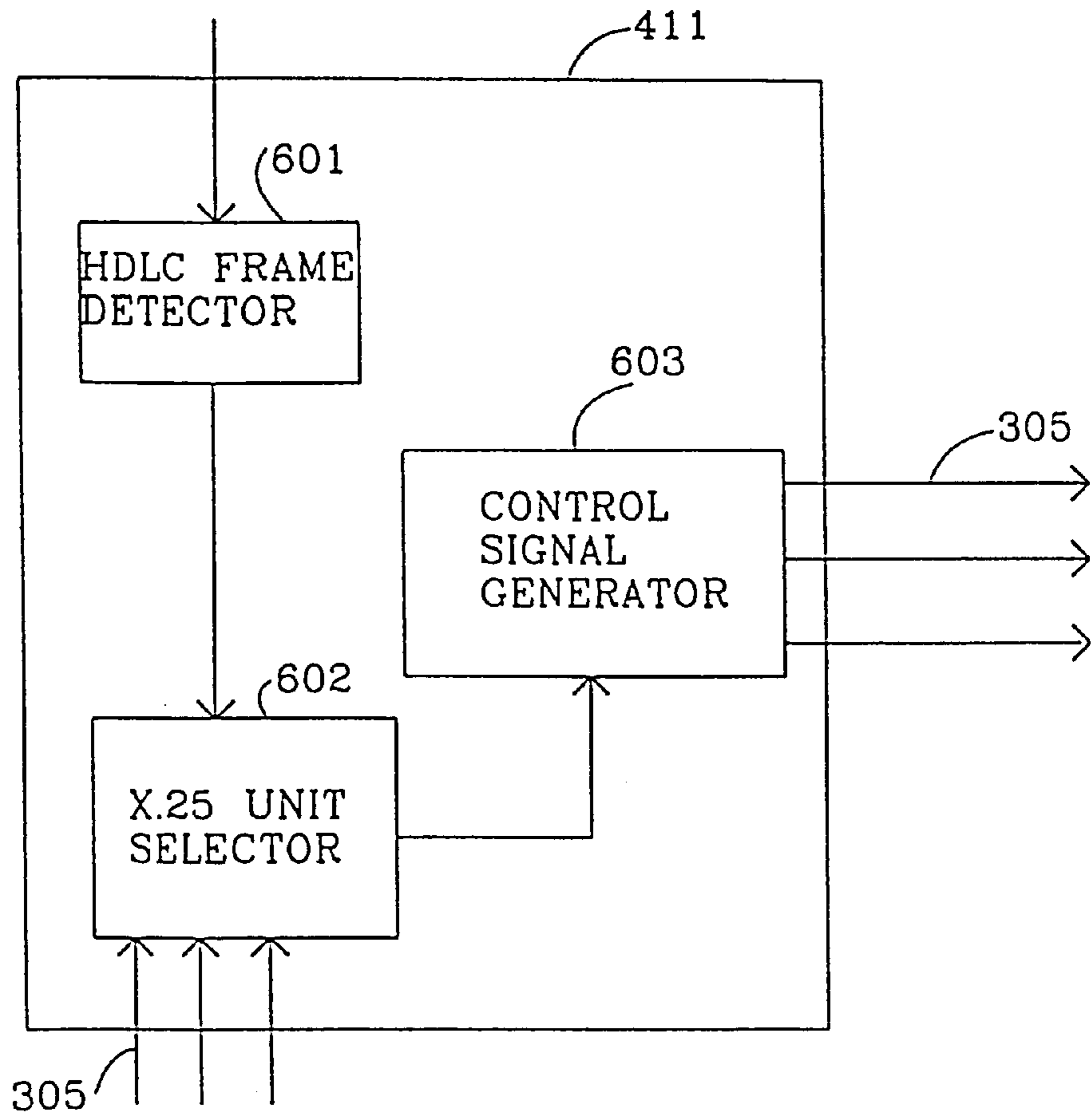


Fig. 6A

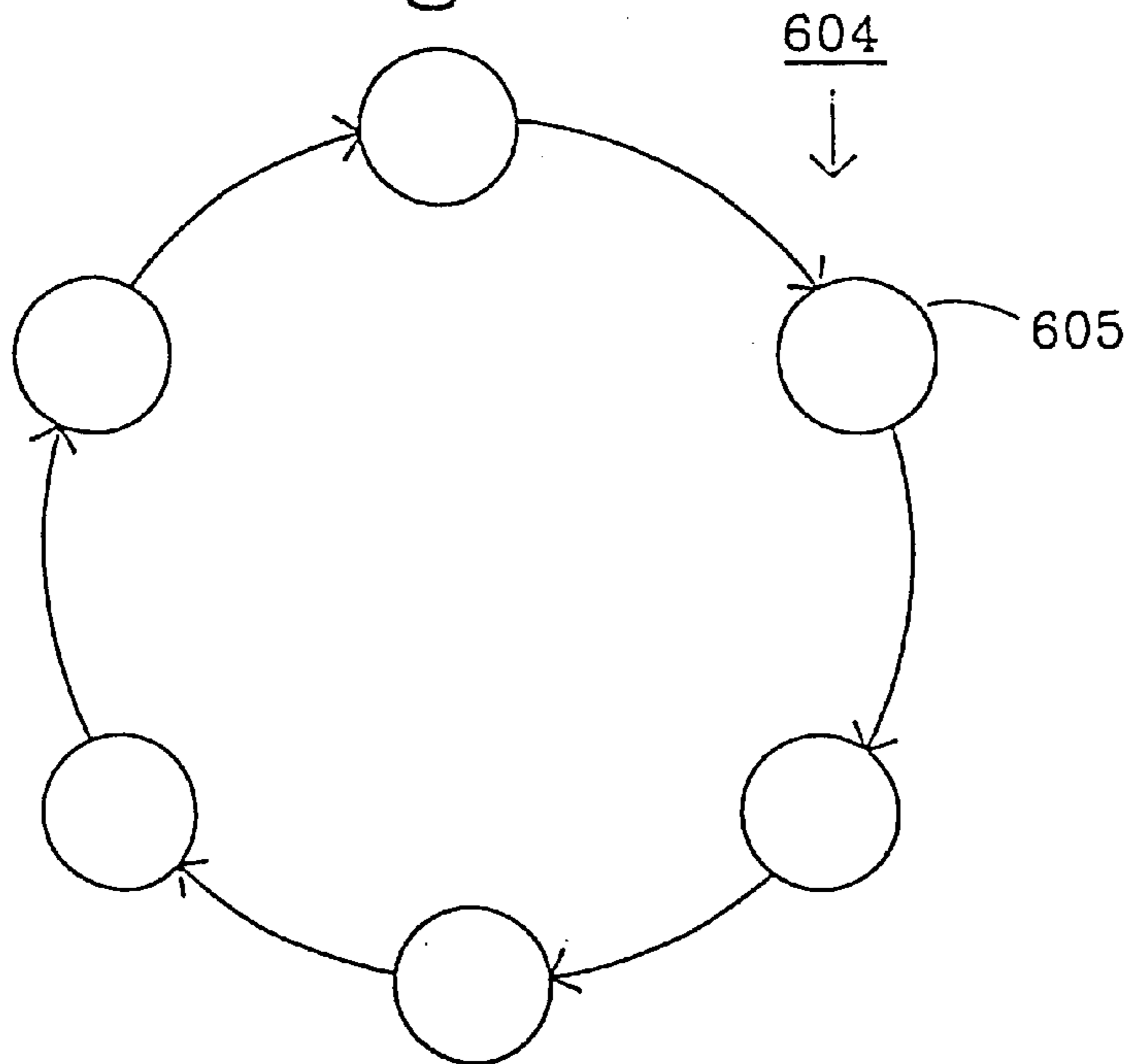


Fig. 6B

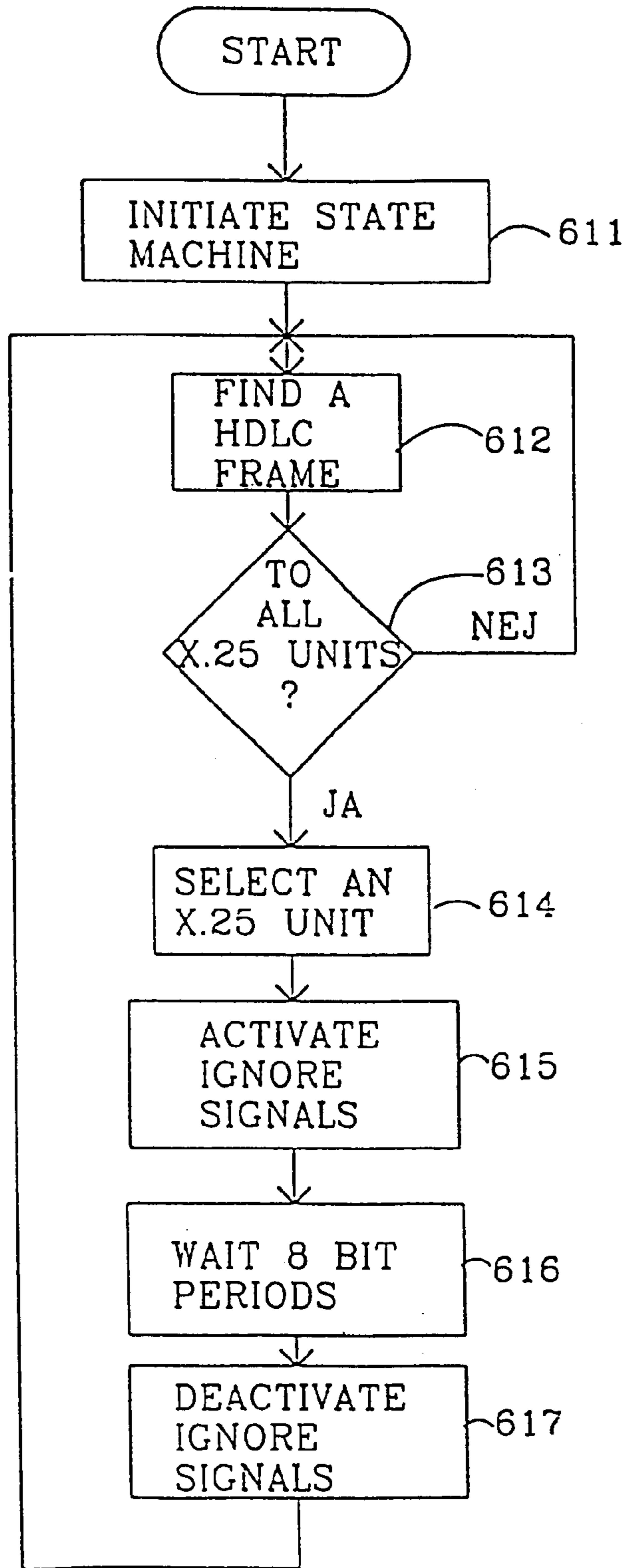


Fig. 6C

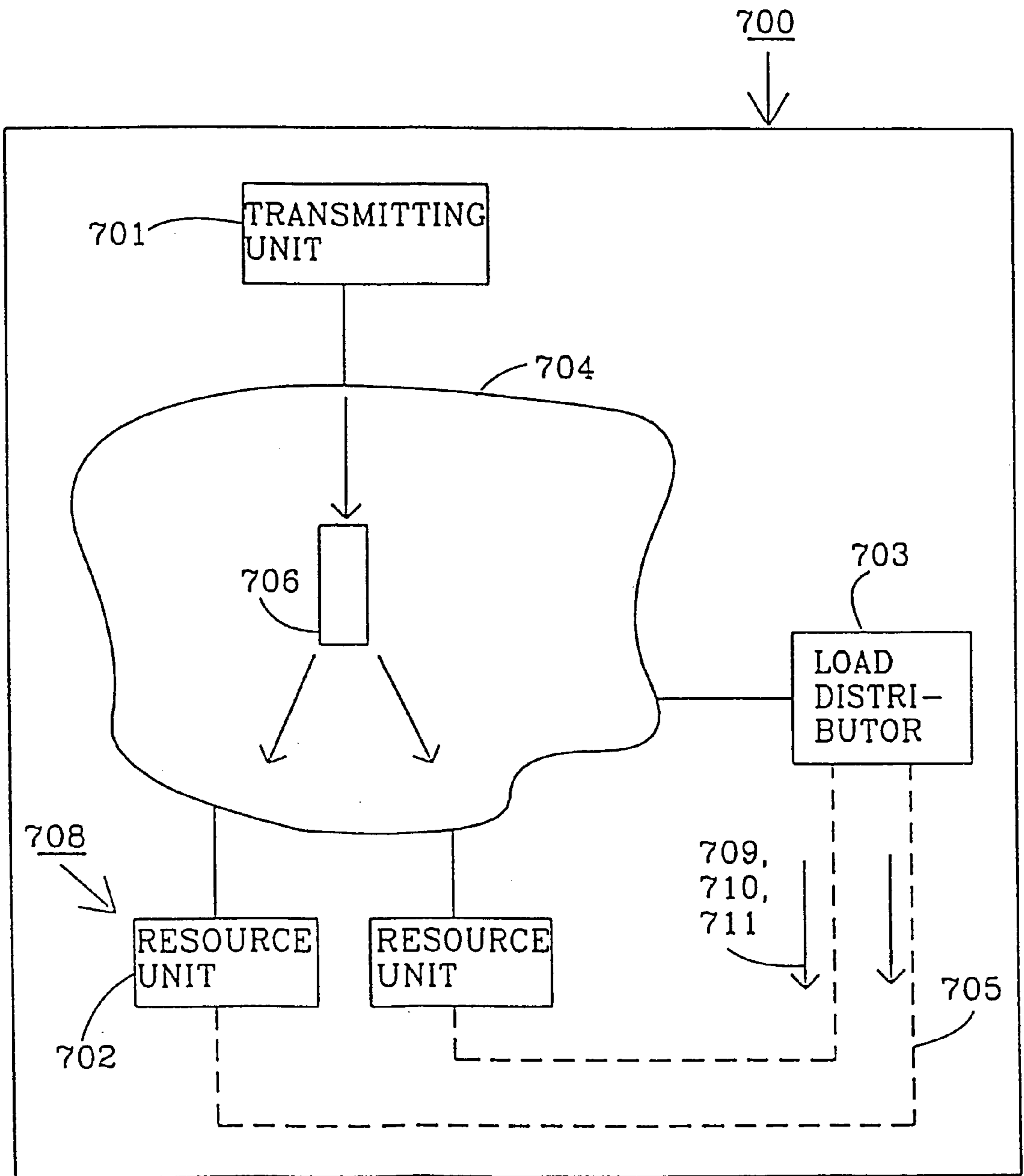


Fig. 7

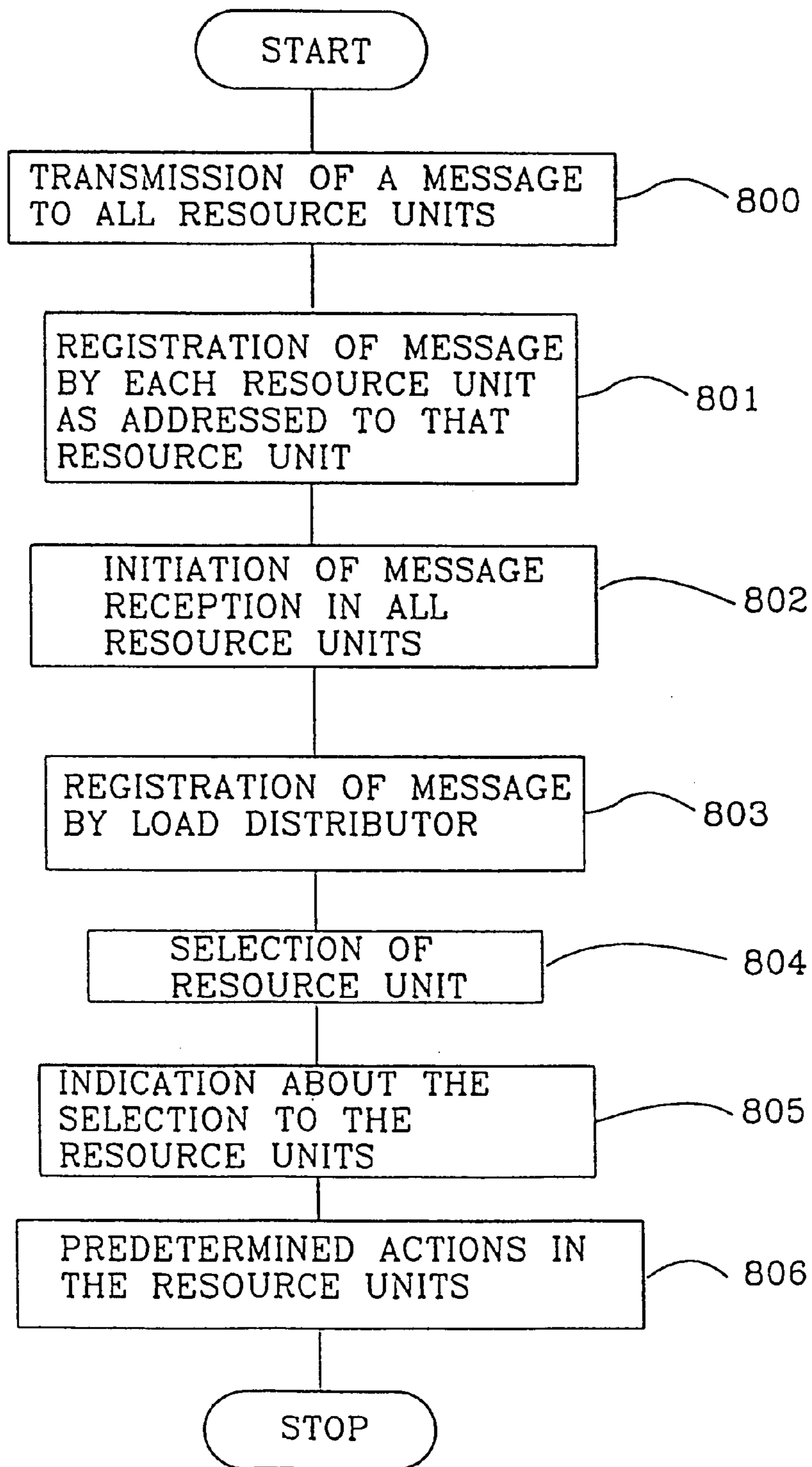


Fig. 8

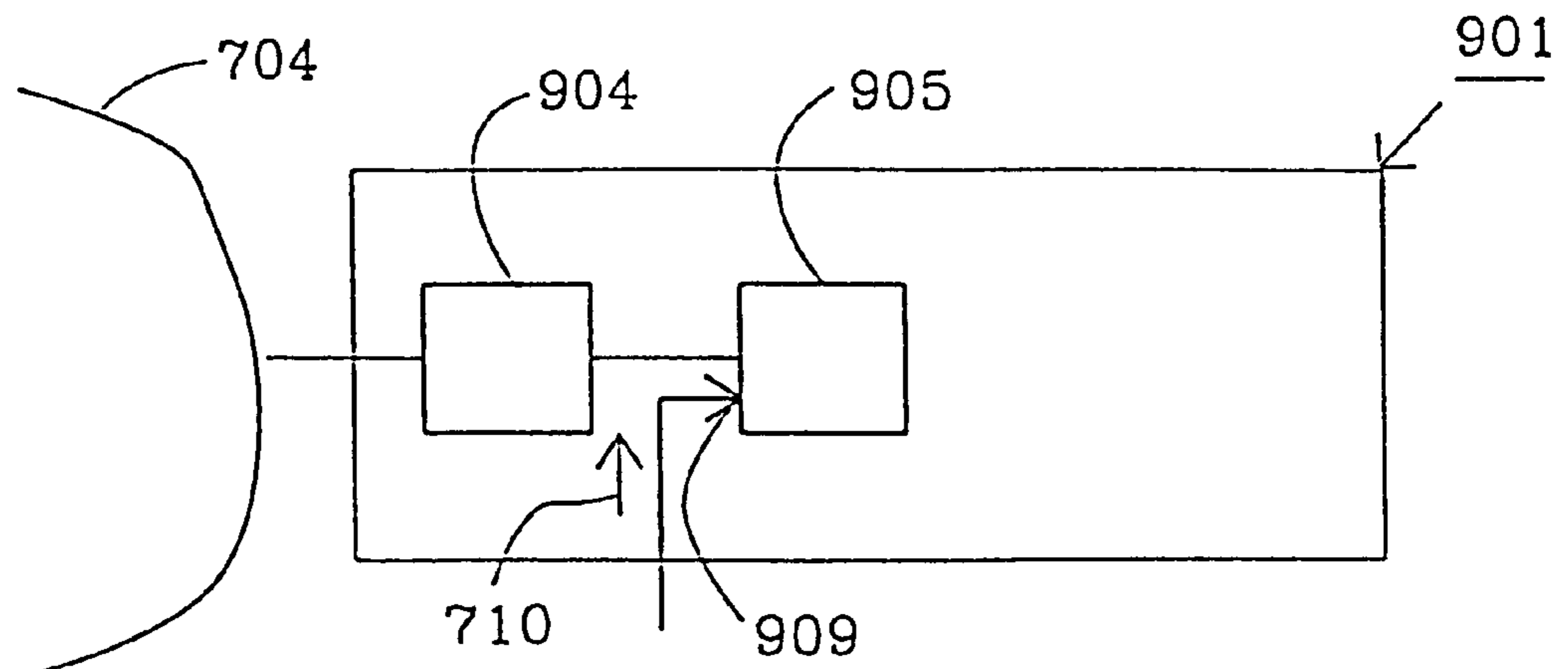


Fig. 9A

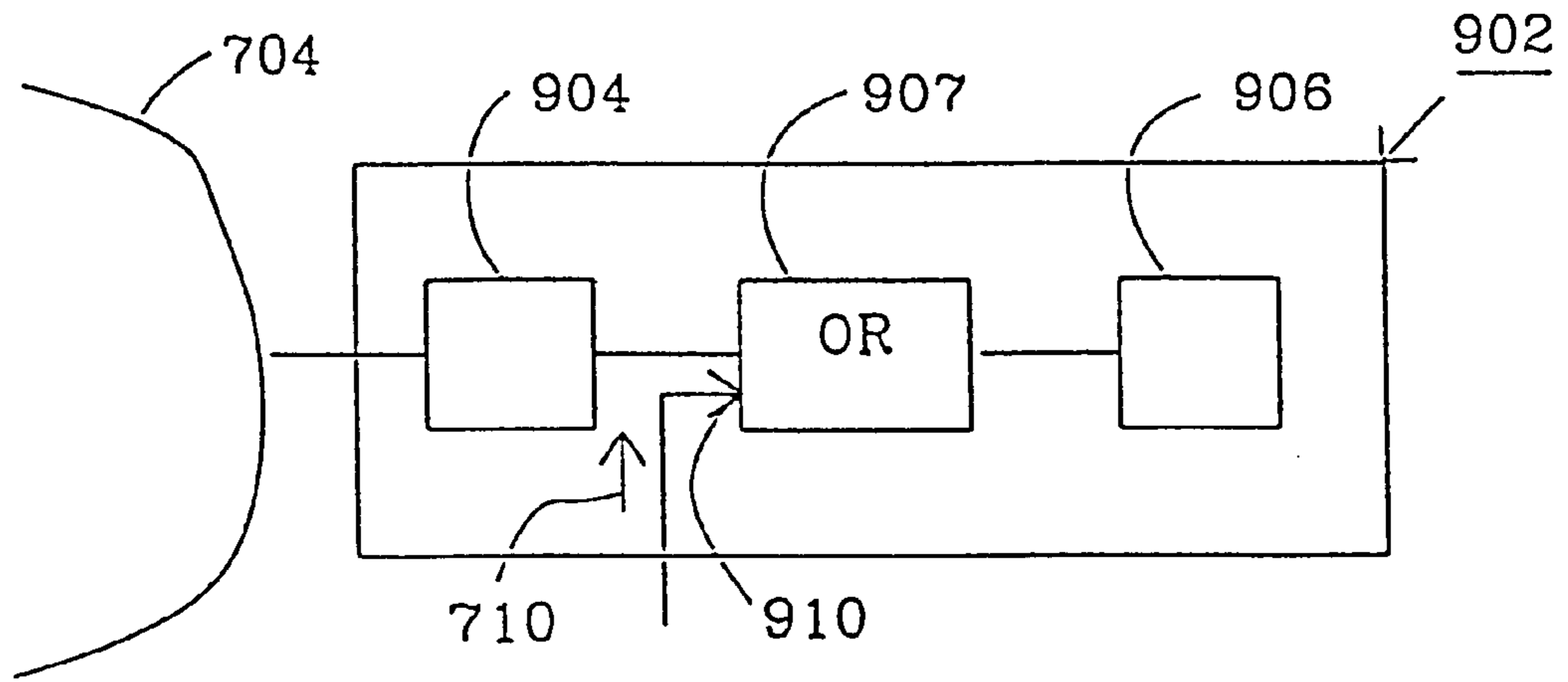


Fig. 9B

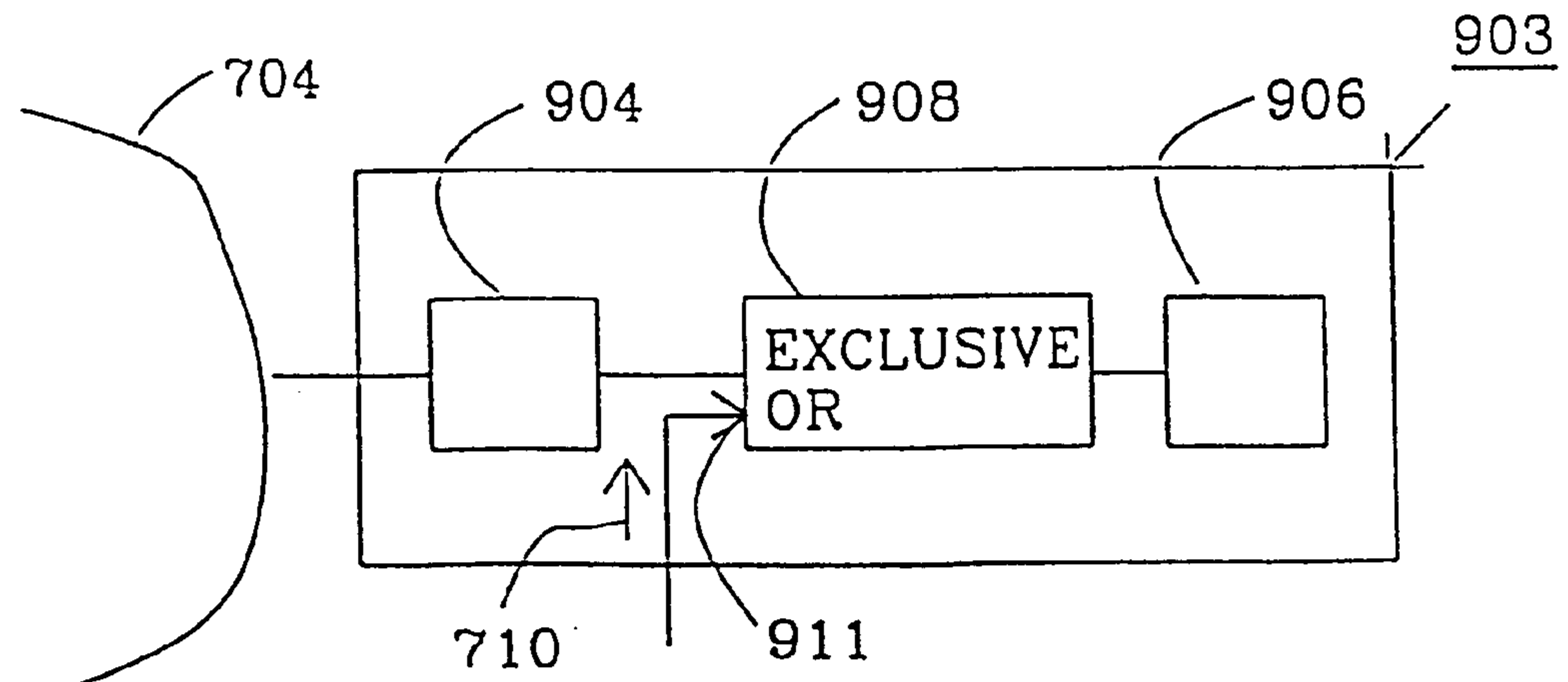


Fig. 9C

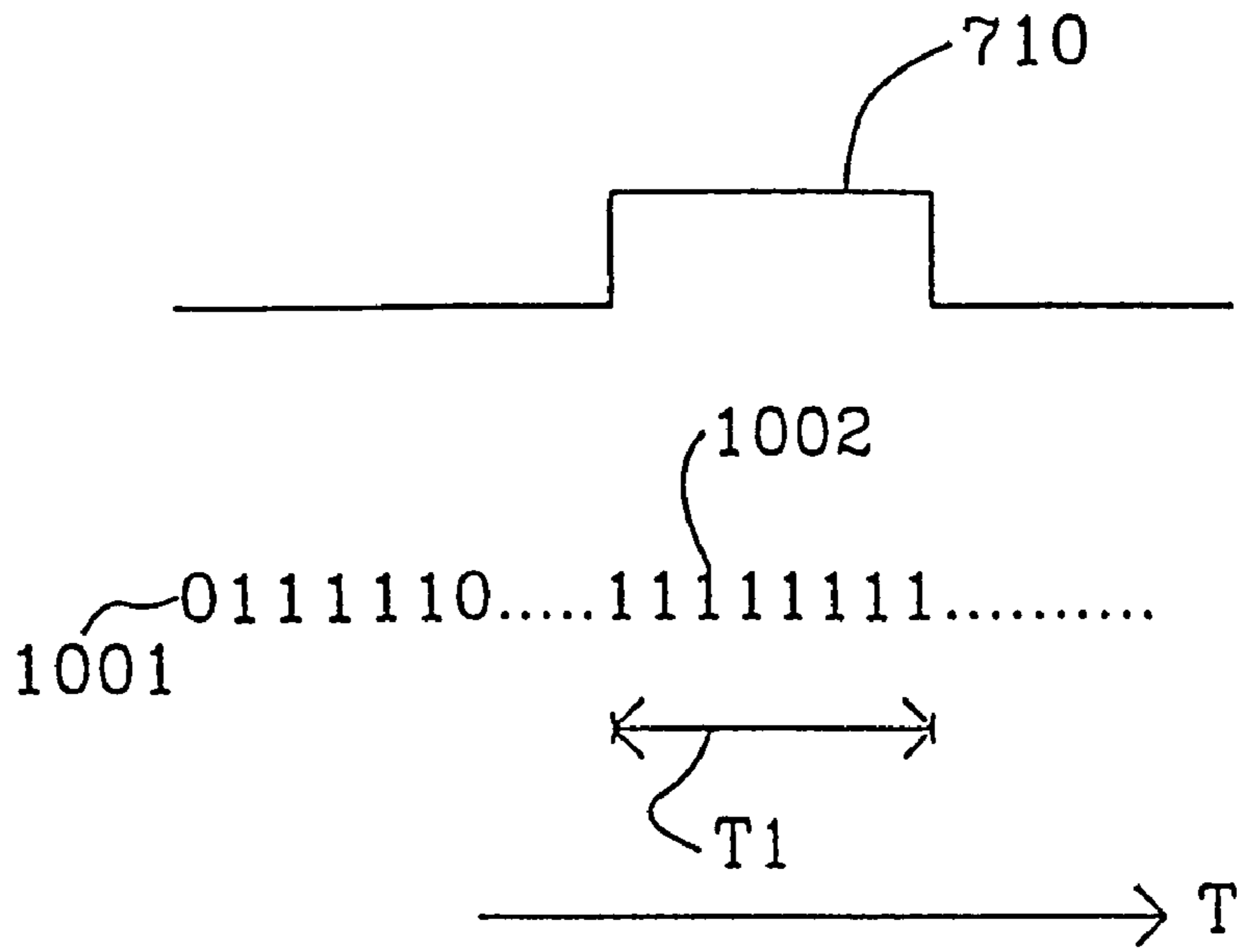


Fig. 10A

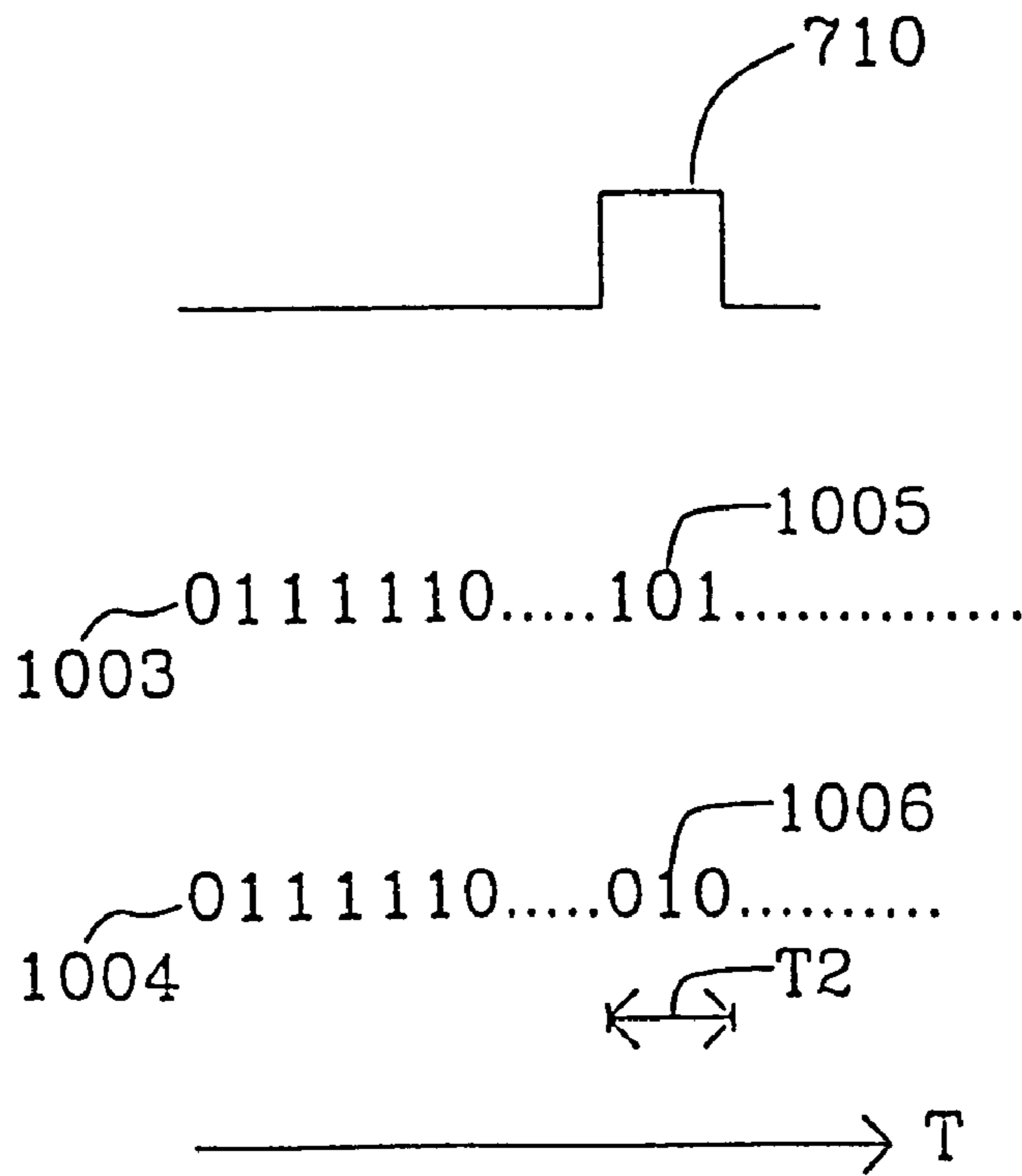


Fig. 10B

SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATING UNITS AND A METHOD IN SAID SYSTEM

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a system of communicating units with a device for distributing a load over a number of resource units comprised in a resource group in the system. The invention also comprises a method to be used in a system of said kind.

STATE OF THE ART

A system for mobile communication comprises base stations, each of which comprises a number of transceiver units, which handle radio communication with mobile stations in the system. Information transmitted/received via radio is communicated between a transceiver unit in a base station and a switch to which the base station is connected. In the base station there is a number of so called X.25 units, each of which handles an X.25 link for communication with the switch. To avoid any of the X.25 units being overloaded because of uneven load distribution over the X.25 units, the base station comprises a control unit which provides load distribution over the X.25 units. Information from a transceiver unit going to the switch is transmitted in a message to the control unit, which selects one of the X.25 units and forwards the message to the selected X.25 unit. The selected X.25 unit then transmits the information to the switch through the X.25 link handled by this X.25 unit.

A problem with the above mentioned solution is that the control unit, having a limited capacity, constitutes a bottleneck and also causes a delay, especially in times of high traffic load.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,227,775 describes a system with base stations and remote units, in which transmissions from a number of the remote units to one of the base stations are co-ordinated to reduce the number of collisions arising because several of the remote units are transmitting at the same time on one incoming channel to the base station. The co-ordination is based on the base station transmitting an inhibition signal which, when any of the remote units transmits a message, puts all other remote units in a state where they are unable to transmit.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,357,559 discloses a cellular mobile telephony system with cells organized in umbrella cells and micro cells. The micro cells under a certain umbrella cell listen to the control channel of the umbrella cell in the uplink direction and measure the signal strength in a call from a mobile station. The most suitable cell, either one of the microcells or the umbrella cell, is selected to handle the call.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,638,476 describes a technique for dynamic allocation of resources in a communication system. In the communication system, several users share one channel. In order to provide good protection against fading in the channel, normally long channel codes are used for transmission on the channel. In periods when the need for transmission capacity is high shorter channel codes are used, enabling the transmission of more information on the channel albeit with a reduced protection against fading. In a terminal intended for use in the system the selection of channel code is controlled by a unit called rate controller, which supervises the degree of activity on a bus in the terminal and selects a channel code in dependence of the degree of activity.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention attacks the problem, in a system in which the content of a message transmitted from a trans-

mitting unit is to be handled by a resource unit in a resource group comprising several resource units, of achieving a desired load distribution over the resource units in the resource group.

The invention solves the above mentioned problem through a method and an arrangement in which the message is transmitted to all the resource units. A load distributor then selects at least one of the resource units and informs the resource units about which one of the resource units has been selected. The resource units handle the content of the message in different ways depending on whether or not the resource unit was selected.

In somewhat more detail the above mentioned problem is solved by the transmitting unit transmitting the message through a system internal communication network to the resource units in the resource group. Each of the resource units perceives the message as addressed to itself and initiates reception of the message. The load distributor is also connected to the communication network and perceives the message as a message for which the load distributor is to select at least one of the resource units. The load distributor selects one of the resource units and transmits control signals through a transmission medium to the resource units, comprising information about which one of the resource units has been selected. The handling of the message by the resource units depends on whether or not the resource unit in question has been selected or not. According to a typical case, the resource units that were not selected choose to ignore the content of the transmitted message, while the selected resource unit uses the content of the message, for example, to forward parts of the content of the message through a communication link to a system external unit.

An object of the invention is to achieve a desired load distribution over the resource units in the system.

Another object is to achieve the load distribution without causing bottlenecks in the system because of the load distribution, which when the load increases could cause an increased delay in the system.

Yet another object is to achieve the load distribution without introducing any delay at all in the system because of the load distribution.

An advantage of the invention is that load distribution is achieved without any bottleneck in the system being caused by the load distribution and therefore there is no risk that the load distribution is achieved at the cost of an increasing delay in the system when the load increases.

Another advantage of the invention is that the load distribution can be achieved without any delay of the information caused by the load distribution when transmitting to the resource unit that is to handle the information. This is of great value in applications that are sensitive to delays, such as transmission of speech in real time.

The invention will be described in more detail in the following, with reference to the appended drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a view of a mobile communication system.

FIG. 2 is a schematic block diagram of a base station according to prior art.

FIG. 3 is a schematic block diagram of a base station with load distribution according to the invention.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram in somewhat more detail of parts of the base station according to FIG. 3.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of the frame format in HDLC.

FIG. 6A is a functional block diagram of a programmable circuit in the load distributor in a base station according to FIGS. 3 and 4.

FIG. 6B is a state transitional diagram of a state machine used in the selection of an X.25 unit.

FIG. 6C is a flow chart describing the function of the load distributor in a base station according the FIGS. 3 and 4.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a system with the inventive load distribution over resource units in a resource group.

FIG. 8 is a flow chart describing an inventive method.

FIG. 9A is a schematic block diagram of a resource unit with a communication circuit with a control input for receiving an ignoring signal.

FIG. 9B is a schematic block diagram of a resource unit with a distortion means in the form of an OR gate.

FIG. 9C is a schematic block diagram of a resource unit with a distortion means in the form of an Exclusive OR gate.

FIG. 10A shows, in a time diagram, an ignoring signal and a bit sequence after the OR gate in a resource unit according to FIG. 9B.

FIG. 10B shows, in a time diagram, an ignoring signal and a bit sequence before and after the Exclusive OR gate in a resource unit according to FIG. 9C.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

FIG. 1 shows a part of a system 100 for mobile communication. A user of the mobile communication system 100 communicates by means of a mobile station MS1. Base stations BS1-BS3 in the mobile communication system 100 provide radio coverage in the area served by the system 100. The mobile station MS1 communicates by means of radio signals with the base station BS1 providing radio coverage in the area, or cell, in which the mobile station is currently located. Each of the base stations BS1-BS3 comprises a number of transceiver units 101-102, divided in a first group and a second group, which provide transmission/reception of radio signals. The base stations BS1-BS3 in the system 100 are connected to an exchange (Mobile Services Switching Centre) MSC1. The exchange MSC1 is responsible for connecting calls to/from the mobile station MS1 in the area covered by the base stations BS1-BS3 connected to the exchange MSC1. In addition to speech communication (telephony), the mobile communication system offers data communication to the user. In the base stations BS1-BS3, for speech communication one of the transceiver units 102 in the first group is used, whereas for data communication one of the transceiver units 101 in the second group is used. User information transmitted to or received by the transceiver units 101 belonging to the second group is communicated between the base station BS1 and the exchange MSC1 to which the base station BS1 is connected, through so called X.25 links 103. In the following, the term transceiver unit will be taken to mean one of the transceiver units 101 in the second group.

FIG. 2 shows, schematically, a block diagram of the base station BS1 according to an embodiment known in the art. The transceiver units 101 (TRX) of the base station 101 are connected to a first serial bus 201. In the base station BS1 there are a number of X.25 units 202, each of which handles one of the X.25 links 103 for communication with the exchange MSC1. The X.25 units 202 in the base station BS1 are connected to a second serial bus 203. A control unit 204 is connected to both buses 201, 203.

When one of the transceiver units 101 receives user information from the mobile station MS1, the transceiver unit sends a message comprising this user information through the first bus 201 to the control unit 204. The control

unit 204 selects one of the X.25 units 202 and forwards the message to the selected X.25 unit 202 through the second bus 203. The X.25 unit 202 in turn forwards the user information to the exchange MSC1 in a message through the X.25 link 103 handled by the X.25 unit 202. The control unit 204 distributes the load over the different X.25 units 202 using a so called round robin method, which means that the messages are distributed cyclically to the X.25 units in turn.

A message from the exchange MSC1 comprising user information and the address of the transceiver unit 101 that is to transmit the user information to the mobile station MS1, is received through one of the X.25 links 103 by the X.25 unit 202 handling the X.25 link 103 in question. The content of the received message is forwarded by the X.25 unit 202 in a message transmitted through the second bus 203 to the control unit 204. From the content of the message, the control unit 204 reads the address of the transceiver unit 101 that is to handle the information and forwards the message to the transceiver unit 101 through the first bus 201.

One problem with the solution described above is that since all messages between the transceiver units 101 and the X.25 units 202 are routed through the control unit 204, a delay is caused in the transmission of information between the transceiver units 101 and the X.25 units 202. Since the control unit has a limited capacity, this delay increases when the traffic load becomes heavy.

FIG. 3 shows, schematically, a block diagram of a base station BS2 where the load distribution is achieved in accordance with the present invention. In this case the transceiver units 301 of the base station BS2 are connected to the same serial bus 302 as the X.25 units 303 of the base station BS2. There is also a separate load distributor 304 connected to the bus 302. Each of the X.25 units 303 is connected to the load distributor 304 through an individual connection 305.

A message from the exchange MSC1 comprising user information and the address of the transceiver unit 301 that is to transmit the user information to the mobile station MS1, is received through one of the X.25 links 103 by the X.25 unit 303 handling the X.25 link 103 in question. The X.25 unit 303 derives from the message the address of the transceiver unit 301 that is to handle the information and forwards the user information to the transceiver unit 301 in question in a message 307 through the bus 302.

The user information received by one of the transceiver units 301 from the mobile station MS1, is transmitted by the transceiver unit 301 in a message 308 through the bus 302 with an address that is common to all X.25 units 303. Thus, each of the X.25 units 303 will perceive the message 308 as addressed to itself and initiate the reception of the message 308. The load distributor 304 monitors all traffic on the bus 302 and when it recognizes a message 308 with the address common to the X.25 units, selects one of the X.25 units 303 to handle the message in question 308. The load distributor then transmits control signals 309 to the X.25 units 303 that have not been selected, ordering them to ignore the content of the message 308 in question. This order is given through the individual connections 305 corresponding to each of the X.25 units 303 that have not been selected. The X.25 units 303 that have not been selected interrupt the reception and ignore the content of the message 308 in question, while the selected X.25 unit 303 forwards the user information in the message 308 to the exchange MSC1 in a message through the X.25 link 103 handled by the X.25 unit 303. Besides the transceiver units 301, the X.25 units 303 and the load distributor 304, further units 306 may be connected to the bus 302.

FIG. 4 shows, in somewhat more detail, how one of the transceiver units **301**, the load distributor **304** and one of the X.25 units **303** in the base station BS2 are connected to the serial bus **302**.

The transceiver unit **301**, the load distributor **304** and the X.25 unit **303** are connected to the bus **302** by means of one transceiver circuit **401** each, which in the exemplifying embodiment is of the make SN75176. Signal transmission between the transceiver circuits **401** connected to the bus **302** is achieved in the exemplifying embodiment according to the standard EIA RS-485. Message transmission between the transceiver units **301** and the X.25 units **303** is achieved according to a protocol based on the High-level Data Link Control (HDLC) protocol, well known in the art. The messages **307-308** sent internally in the base station BS2 through the serial bus **302** are thus made up of HDLC frames with a format as shown in FIG. 5.

An HDLC frame **500** starts and ends with a flag **501**. Between these flags **501** there is an address field **502**, a control field **503**, an information field **504** and a checksum field called "Frame Check Sequence" **505** (FCS). The flags **501** define the beginning and the end of a frame. The address field **502** in a frame **500** controls which one of the units connected to the bus **302** that is to receive the frame **500** in question. An address "7F" (hexadecimal) is in this case the common address for the X.25 units **303**, that is, a frame **500** with the address "7F" will be received by each of the X.25 units **303**. Information to be transmitted or that has been received through one of the X.25 links **103** is carried in the information field **504**.

The X.25 unit **303** is based on a control circuit **402**, which in this exemplifying embodiment is a Motorola MC68360 "QUad Integrated Communications Controller". Said control circuit **402** comprises, among other things, a main processor **403** and four Serial Communication Controller (SCC) units **404**. One of the SCC units **404** is connected to the transceiver circuit **401** of the X.25 unit **303** and handles communication on the serial bus **302**. This first SCC unit **404** is configured to function as an HDLC communication circuit and handles transmission/reception of HDLC frames **500** (see FIG. 5) practically without interacting with the main processor **403**. The other SCC units **404** are connected to a physical interface **405** for communication with the exchange MSC1 (see FIG. 1) and each handles an X.25 link **103**. Said physical interface **405** transmits data according to the ITU standard G.703 and is in the exemplifying embodiment implemented using two circuits from Philips, of the makes PE82235 and PE82035, respectively. The message transmission on the X.25 links **103** is done according to a well known standardized protocol called Link Access Procedure-Balanced (LAPB), which is a variant of HDLC, and thus the SCC units **404** handling the X.25 links **103** are also configured to function as HDLC communication circuits and transmit and receive HDLC frames **500**.

When the first SCC unit **404** receives an HDLC frame **500** on the serial bus **302**, the content of this HDLC frame **500** is stored in a message buffer **406** in a memory **407** connected to the control circuit **402**, until the entire HDLC frame **500** has been received, and an interrupt is then generated to the main processor **403**. The main processor **403** retrieves the content of the message buffer **406** from the memory **407** and at this point discovers that there is user information to be forwarded on one of the X.25 links **103**. The main processor **403** selects one of the X.25 links **103** and stores the user information in a new message buffer **406** in the memory **407**. The main processor **403** then orders the SCC unit **404** handling the selected X.25 link **103** to use the content in the

last mentioned message buffer **406** to assemble an LAPB/HDLC frame **500** and transmit it on the selected X.25 link **103** to the exchange MSC1.

When an LAPB/HDLC frame **500** is received on one of the X.25 links **103**, the frame **500** is received by the SCC unit **404** handling the X.25 link **103** in question. The content of the frame **500** is stored in a message buffer **406** in the memory **407** until the whole frame **500** has been received. An interrupt is then generated to the main processor **403**. The main processor **403** retrieves the content of the message buffer **406** from the memory **407** and discovers that there is user information to be forwarded to one of the transceiver units **301**. The main processor **403** extracts the address of the transceiver unit **301** in question from the content of the message buffer **406** and stores this address together with user information to be transmitted to the transceiver unit **301** in a new message buffer **406** in the memory **407** and orders the first SCC unit **404** to use the content of the last mentioned message buffer **406** to assemble an HDLC frame **500** and transmit it on the serial bus **302**.

The mechanism that enables the load distributor **304** to order the X.25 unit **303** to ignore the content of an HDLC frame **500** that is being received on the serial bus **302**, uses the possibility specified in HDLC for a unit transmitting an HDLC frame **500** to abort this frame **500** by transmitting an abort sequence of at least 7 ones in a row, which results in the receiving unit ignoring the frame **500** in question. The receiver output **408** of the transceiver circuit **401** belonging to the X.25 unit **303** can be put in a high impedance state by a high level being applied to a certain control input **409** ("Receiver Output Enable"). To the receiver output **408** a so called pull up resistor **410** is connected, which means that when the output **408** is in its high impedance state the first SCC unit **404** connected to the receiver output **408** will detect a high level. The load distributor **304** is connected to said control input **409** of the transceiver circuit **401** belonging to the X.25 unit **303** through one of the previously mentioned individual connections **305**. When the load distributor **304** is to order the X.25 unit **303** to ignore an HDLC frame **500** during reception, the load distributor **304** applies a high level to the above mentioned control input **409** during a time period corresponding to eight bit periods. The receiver output **408** of the transceiver circuit **401** will then be high during eight bit periods, which will be read by the first SCC unit **404** connected to the transceiver circuit **401** as a sequence of eight ones and which in turn will be interpreted by the first SCC unit **404** as the transceiver unit **301** having aborted the HDLC frame **500** in question. The first SCC unit **404** is configured to generate no interrupt when an HDLC frame **500** has been aborted. Therefore, the main processor **403** of the control circuit **402** never becomes aware of the aborted HDLC frames **500** and thus no extra load occurs in the main processor **403** in spite of the fact that a considerable number of HDLC frames **500** may be aborted.

The load distributor **304** is based on a programmable circuit **411**, which in this exemplifying embodiment is an AMD MACH220, connected to the receiver output **408** of the transceiver circuit **401** belonging to the load distributor **304**. Furthermore the outputs **412** of the programmable circuit **411** are connected to the previously mentioned control input **409** of the transceiver circuits **401** belonging to each of the X.25 units **303**, through the above mentioned individual connections **305**. In this way the load distributor **304**, in the way described above, can order each of the X.25 units **303** to ignore an HDLC frame **500** received on the serial bus **302** by any one of the X.25 units.

As indicated above, each of the X.25 units **303** handles three X.25 links **103**. If any of the X.25 links **103** is out of service because of an error situation, the transmission capacity of the X.25 unit is decreased. For this reason, each of the X.25 units **303** informs the load distributor **304** about how many of the X.25 links **103** are out of service at any given time. This is done through separate connections **415** going from three outputs **413** on the control circuit **402** belonging to each of the X.25 units **303** to inputs **414** of the programmable circuit **411** belonging to the load distributor **304**. The connections **415** are of limited importance to the invention and thus are not described in more detail. They are also not shown in FIG. 3.

FIG. 6A shows a functional division of the programmable circuit **411** into function blocks. A function block HDLC frame detector **601** recognizes HDLC frames **500** (see FIGS. 5 and 4) for which load distribution is to be performed. When a new HDLC frame **500** is detected, which is labelled with the address "7F" which is common to the X.25 units **303**, a signal is generated to a function block **602** called X.25 unit selector. The latter function block comprises a state machine **604**, which is illustrated in FIG. 6B. Each state **605** in the state machine **604** represents one of the X.25 links **103** and the states are connected in a closed circle. Each of the states **605** is associated with information about whether or not the X.25 link **103** corresponding to the state is in service, and which one of the X.25 units **303** handles the link **103** in question. When the X.25 unit selector **602** receives the above mentioned signal from the HDLC frame detector **601**, the selector **602** steps the state machine **604** to the next state **605** corresponding to one of the X.25 links **103** in service. The X.25 unit **303** handling the X.25 link **103** corresponding to said state **605** is selected. The X.25 unit selector **602** orders a function block **603** called control signal generator in FIG. 6A to order all X.25 units **303** that have not been selected to ignore the HDLC frame **500** in question. The control signal generator **603** normally applies a low level to all X.25 units **303** through the above mentioned individual connections **305**. When the control signal generator **603** receives an order from the X.25 unit selector **602** to order one of the X.25 units **303** to ignore an HDLC frame **500**, this is done by, as previously described, applying a high level to the X.25 unit **303** during a period of time corresponding to eight bit periods, whereafter the control signal generator **603** again will apply a low level to the X.25 unit **303**.

A complementary description of the function of the load distributor **304** is given in the flow chart in FIG. 6C. When the load distributor **304** is connected to the bus **302** and thus is activated, the previously mentioned state machine **604** is initiated in step **611**. In step **612** the bus **302** is monitored until the beginning of an HDLC frame **500** is detected, that is, an HDLC flag **501** (see FIG. 5) is found. In step **613** the content of the address field **502** of the HDLC frame **500** is analyzed to determine whether or not the frame **500** in question is labelled with the address "7F", common to the X.25 units **303**. If the frame **500** does not have the common address (result NO), the load distributor returns to step **612** to look for the beginning of the next HDLC frame **500**. If, on the other hand, the frame **500** is addressed to all the X.25 units **303** (result YES), then in step **614** one of the X.25 units **303** is selected to handle the HDLC frame **500** in question. The selection is made in the way described in connection with FIG. 6B. In step **615** ignore signals (high level) are activated towards all the X.25 units **303** that have not been selected. The load distributor **304** then waits in step **616** for a period of time corresponding to eight bit periods before it deactivates the ignore signals (low level) in step **617**. The

load distributor **304** returns to step **612** to look for a new HDLC frame **500**.

The unit referred to as a load distributor **304** in FIGS. 3 and 4 perform a number of additional functions regarding supervision and control in the base station BS2 and also comprises a considerable number of circuits in addition to the ones shown in FIG. 4. These functions are, however, of no significance when describing the present invention and, therefore, are not described in more detail. In the same way, each of the transceiver units **301** comprise a considerable number of circuits (for example, transmitter/receiver) in addition to the transceiver circuit **401** for connection to the serial bus **302** and a control circuit **402**, but as the only function performed by the transceiver unit **301** when describing the invention is to transmit and receive HDLC frames **500** on the serial bus **302**, the transceiver unit **301** is also not described in more detail.

FIG. 7 illustrates an inventive system **700** expressed in general terms. The system **700** comprises at least one transmitting unit **701**, at least one resource group **708** comprising at least two resource units **702** and a load distributor **703**, all of which are connected to a system internal communication network **704**. The system also comprises a transmission means **705** intended to transmit control signals **709** from the load distributor **703** to the resource units **702** in the resource group **708**.

The transmitting unit **701** transmit messages **706** to the resource units **702** in the resource group **708**. The system internal communication network **704** is arranged for transmitting said messages **706** serially between the transmitting unit **701** and the resource units **702**. For at least one selected message **706** of said messages all resource units **702** in the resource group **708** are each arranged for registering the selected message **706** as addressed to itself, so that all resource units **702** initiate the reception of the selected message **706**. The load distributor **703** is arranged for registering the selected message **706** and selecting, for the selected message **706**, according to a predetermined rule such as round robin, at least one of the resource units **702**. The load distributor **703** emits control signals **709** to the resource units **702** in the resource group **708** comprising information about said selection, said control signals being transmitted between the load distributor **703** and the resource units **702** through the previously mentioned transmission means **705**. The resource units **702** are arranged for performing predetermined actions in connection with the selected message **706** in dependence of said control signals **709**.

FIG. 8 illustrates, in a flow chart, the inventive method for load distribution in a system **700** according to FIG. 7.

At step **800** a message **706** is sent from the transmitting unit. At step **801**, this message **706** is registered by each of the resource units **702** in the resource group **708** as addressed to that resource unit, and at step **802** all resource units **702** thus initiate reception of the message **706**. The load distributor **703** registers the message **706** at step **803** and selects, at step **804**, at least one of the resource units **702** for this message. At step **805** the load distributor indicates to the resource units **702** in the resource group **708** which at least one of the resource units **702** has been selected. At step **806** the resource units **702** perform predetermined actions in connection with the message **706** and in dependence of the previously mentioned indication of which at least one of the resource units **702** has been selected.

Of course the resource units **702** in FIG. 7 can handle different types of communication links, such as X.25 or

frame relay for communication with system external units. The resource units **702** can, however, handle other types of resources than communication links as well. One example of this is in a system **700** in which the resource units **702** handle a database which has been duplicated to a number of resource units **702** to enhance its performance.

The above mentioned predetermined actions performed in connection with the selected message **706** by the resource units **702**, are determined by the type of resources handled by the resource units. Usually, regardless of resource type, the resource units **702** that have not been selected ignore the content of the selected message **706**. The actions taken in the selected resource unit **702** may comprise, for example, as in the embodiment according to FIG. 3, forwarding parts of the message content. In the example of the duplicated database, the selected message **706** comprises a search query, in which the selected resource unit **702** finds an answer to the question asked and returns the answer in a message to the transmitting unit **701**.

The load distributor **703** in FIG. 7 can use different principles when selecting a resource unit, depending on what principle is best suited for the system **700** in question. Usually the load distributor **703** only selects one of the resource units **702** in the resource group **708** to handle the content of the selected message **706**, but of course the load distributor **703** could select more than one of the resource units **702** if this is desirable in the system **700**.

A simple load distribution principle is to select the resource units **702** in turn according to a round robin method. Another example of a feasible load distribution principle, if the different resource units **702** are not all identical, but have different capacities, is to distribute a heavier load to the resource units **702** having a higher capacity. In the embodiment described in connection with FIG. 4, a combination of the two above mentioned load distribution principles is used. If none of the X.25 links **103** is out of service, the load is distributed according to a pure round robin method. If any of the X.25 links **103** is out of service, the load is distributed over the X.25 units **303** in proportion to the transmission capacity of each of the X.25 units **303** relative to the other X.25 units **303**. Another example of a load distribution principle is to divide the messages **706** and the resource units **702** into priority levels and reserve some of the resource units **702** for handling the content of messages **706** having a high priority, while the remaining resource units **702** are left to handle the content of the messages **706** having a lower priority.

Depending on the principle used for load distribution, the need of the load distributor **703** to understand the content of the message varies from merely recognizing a new message **706** to using one or more data fields in the selected message **706** when selecting the resource unit **702** to handle the message **706** in question. The load distributor **304** used in the embodiment shown in FIG. 4 recognized HDLC flags **501** and the address "7F" common to all X.25 units **303**, indicating that the load distributor **304** is to select one of the X.25 units **303** to handle the HDLC frame **500** in question.

Typically, when selecting one of the resource units **702**, knowledge about selections made in connection with the previously selected messages **706** is used. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 4 the load distributor **304** uses a state machine **604** (see FIG. 6B) when selecting X.25 units **303** and thus utilizes knowledge about previously made selections of resource units **702**. It is, however, also possible to use a load distribution principle in which the selection of the resource unit **702** to handle the content of a selected message

706 is based solely on the content of the message in question **706** without considering how previous selections of resource units **702** have been made.

In certain situations the transmitting unit **701** may have to transmit a sequence of messages **706** that are all to be handled by the same resource unit **702**. One way of handling such a situation is to include data identifying the message sequence, for each of the messages **706** in the sequence, and to let the load distributor **703** select the same resource unit **702** for all messages **706** in the sequence. Another way of handling this situation is to, for the first message in the sequence, let the load distributor **703** select one of the resource units **702**. This selected resource unit **702** transmits a reply message to the transmitting unit **701** comprising the unique address of the resource unit, and the transmitting unit **701** then uses this unique address to address all the following messages in the sequence directly to the selected resource unit **702**.

In the system **700** different types of communication networks **704** may be used. The communication network **704** must provide the possibility of transmitting the selected message **706** so that all resource units **702** in the resource group **708** initiate the reception of the selected message **706**. Furthermore, the load distributor **703** must also be able to register the selected message **706**, for which one of the resource units **702** is to be selected. Examples of other types of communication networks that may be used in connection with the invention instead of the serial RS-485 bus with an HDLC based protocol used in FIG. 4, are networks of so called Ethernet and token ring type.

The transmission means **705** may, as shown in FIG. 3, be made up of separate individual connections **305**. It is, however, also possible to use other types of transmission means **703**. For example, it is possible, if the system internal communication network **704** is made up of a broadband bus, to reserve a frequency band in the broadband bus for transmission of the control signals **709** to the resource units **702**.

The load distributor **703** is preferably arranged for informing the resource units **702** about which one of the resource units **702** has been selected, by means of said control signals **709**, before any of the resource units **702** has received the whole selected message **706**.

The control signals **709** from the load distributor **703** may, according to one example, comprise ignore signals **710**, which are sent to the resource units **702** that have not been selected and explicitly informs them that they have not been selected. Each of the resource units **702** receiving one of said ignore signals **710** is arranged for interrupting the reception of the selected message **706** and for ignoring the content of the message **706**.

The control signals **709** from the load distributor **703** may also, according to another example, comprise a handling signal **711**, which is sent to the selected resource unit **702** and explicitly informs it that it has been selected. When the entire selected message **706** has been received the resource unit **702** that has received the handling signal **711** uses the content of the selected message **706**. The resource units **702** that, after having received the entire selected message **706**, have not received the handling signal **711**, ignore the content of the selected message **706**.

If it is difficult to make sure that the load distributor **703** has time to inform all the resource units **702** about which resource unit **702** has been selected before any of the resource units **702** has received the entire selected message **706**, the resource units **702** may be arranged for awaiting the

reception of a control signal **709** from the load distributor **703**, explicitly telling whether or not the resource unit **702** has been selected. The load distributor emits the above mentioned handling signal **711** to the selected resource unit **702**, and the above mentioned ignore signals **710** to the resource units **702** that were not selected. In case the resource unit **702** receives the handling signal **711**, the resource unit **702** uses the content of the selected message **706**. In case the resource unit **702** receives one of the ignore signals **710**, the resource unit **702** ignores the content of the selected message **706**.

There are several different solutions to how the resource units **702** that have not been selected can be made to ignore the content of the selected message **706**. Some of these solutions are shown in FIGS. **9A-9C**.

FIG. **9A** shows a resource unit **901** with a circuit **904** handling the physical connection to the system internal communication network **704**. A communication circuit **905** supervising the message reception is connected to the connection circuit **904**. The communication circuit **905** is developed especially to enable it to be ordered explicitly to ignore the selected message and provided with a control input **909**. When one of the above mentioned ignore signals **710** is received on the control input **909**, the communication circuit **905** interrupts the reception of the selected message **706** and the resource unit **901** ignores the content of the selected message **706**.

FIG. **9B** shows a resource unit **902** also provided with a connection circuit **904** and in this case a standard communication circuit **906**. The communication circuit **906** in this case handles message reception according to a protocol based on HDLC. The connection circuit **904** is connected to a first input of an OR gate **907**. The communication circuit **906** is connected to the output of the OR gate **907**. The OR gate **907** functions as a distortion means, which is activated when one of the above mentioned ignore signals **710** is received on another input **910** to the OR gate **907**.

FIG. **10A** shows the ignore signal **710** in a time diagram, in which time is indicated by a T. The diagram shows how the ignore signal **710** in this case is made up of a high level during a time interval T1 corresponding to at least 7 bit periods. FIG. **10A** also shows the bit sequence **1001** received by the communication circuit **96** in connection with the selected message **706**. During the time interval T1 in which the ignore signal **710** is active, the communication circuit **906** will read a sequence of at least 7 ones in a row, which will be perceived by the communication circuit **906** as an abort sequence **1001**, and the communication circuit **906** will then interrupt the reception of the selected message **706** and the resource unit **902** will ignore the selected message **706**.

FIG. **9C** shows a resource unit **901**, which differs from the resource unit **902** in FIG. **9B** only in that the OR gate **907** has been replaced by an exclusive OR gate **908**. One of the previously mentioned ignore signals **710** is in this case received by a second input **911** to the gate **908**.

FIG. **10B** illustrates how the ignore signal **710** in this case is made up of a high level during a time interval T2 comprising only a few bit periods. FIG. **10B** also illustrates the bit sequence **1003** received by the exclusive OR gate **908** from the connection circuit **904**, and the bit sequence **1004** emitted from the gate **908** to the communication circuit **906** in connection with the selected message **706**. During the time interval T2 when the ignore signal **710** is active, the gate **908** will emit to the communication circuit **906** a bit sequence **1006** that is inverted compared to the correspond-

ing bits **1005** received by the gate **908** from the connection circuit **904**. When the communication circuit **906** has received the entire selected message **706**, the communication circuit **906** checks the bit sequence **1004** received by the communication circuit **906** against a checksum in order to check that the message has not been distorted. In this check, the communication circuit **906** discovers that the selected message **706** has been distorted, and the resource unit **906** therefore ignores the content of the selected message **706**.

The resource units **702** may be embodied according to FIG. **9A** regardless of the protocol used for transmission of messages between the transmitting unit **701** and the resource units **702**. If an HDLC based protocol or a protocol having a sequence corresponding to the abort sequence of HDLC is used when transmitting the message, the resource units may also be embodied according to the principle shown in FIG. **9B**. If the messages according to the protocol used for message transmission comprise a checksum for detection of distorted messages, the resource units **702** may also be embodied according to the principle shown in FIG. **9C**.

I claim:

1. A system (**700, BS2**) of communicating units (**701, 702, 301, 302**), said system comprising
 - at least one transmitting unit (**701, 701**) arranged for transmitting messages (**706, 308**),
 - at least one resource group (**708**) comprising at least two resource units (**702, 303**) arranged for receiving said messages (**706, 308**),
 - a system internal communication network (**704, 302**) to which the transmitting unit (**701, 301**) and the resource units (**702, 303**) in the resource group (**708**) are connected, said communication network (**704, 302**) being arranged for transmitting said messages (**706, 308**) serially between the transmitting unit (**701, 301**) and the resource units (**702, 303**),
 - a load distributor (**703, 304**) connected to the system internal communication network (**704, 302**) characterized in that
 - the system (**700, BS2**) further comprises transmission means (**705, 305**) for transmitting control signals (**709, 309**) from the load distributor (**703, 304**) to the resource units (**702, 303**) in the resource group (**708**), for at least one selected message (**706, 308**) of said messages (**706, 308**) each resource unit (**702, 303**) is arranged for registering said selected message (**706, 308**) as addressed to itself and initiating reception of said selected message (**706, 308**),
 - the load distributor (**703, 304**) is arranged for registering the selected message (**706, 308**) and for said message (**706, 308**) according to a predetermined rule, selecting at least one of the resource units (**702, 303**),
 - the load distributor (**703, 304**) is also arranged for emitting control signals (**709, 309**) to the resource units (**702, 303**) in the resource group (**708**) comprising information about said selection, said control signals (**709, 309**) being transmitted from the load distributor (**703, 304**) to the resource units (**702, 303**) through said transmission means (**705, 305**),
 - each of the resource units (**702, 303**) in the resource group is arranged for performing predetermined actions in connection with the selected message (**706, 308**), in dependence of said control signals (**709, 309**).
2. A system according to claim 1, characterized in that the load distributor (**703, 304**) is arranged for selecting one and only one of the resource units (**702, 303**).

3. A system (700, BS2) according to claim 1, characterized in that the resource units (702, 303) that are not selected are arranged for ignoring the content of the selected message (706, 308).
4. A system according to claim 1, characterized in that the load distributor (703, 304) is arranged for informing the resource units (702, 303) through said control signals (709, 309) about which at least one of the resource units (702, 303) has been selected, before any of the resource units (702, 303) has received the entire selected message (706, 308).
5. A system according to claim 4, characterized in that said control signals (709, 309) comprise ignore signals (710, 309) to the resource units (702, 303) that are not selected, each of the resource units (702, 303) receiving one of the ignore signals (710, 309) being arranged for interrupting the reception of the selected message (706, 308) and ignoring the content of the message (706, 308).
6. A system according to claim 4, characterized in that said control signals (709) comprise a handling signal (711) to the selected resource unit (702), each of said resource units (702) being arranged for, after receiving the entire selected message (706), using the content of the selected message (706) in the case when the resource unit (702) has received the handling signal (711) and in the opposite case ignoring the content of the selected message (706).
7. A system according to claim 1, characterized in that said control signals (709) from the load distributor (703) comprise both ignore signals (710) to the resource units (702) that have not been selected, and a handling signal (711) to the selected resource unit (702), each of the resource units (702) being arranged for, in the case when it receives the handling signal (711), using the content of the selected message (706), and in the case when it receives one of the ignore signals (710), ignoring the content of the selected message (706).
8. A system (700, BS2) according to claim 1, wherein transmission and reception of said messages take place according to a certain protocol and the resource units (902, 903, 303) are provided with means (906, 404) for supervision of message reception, characterized in that at least one of the resource units (303) comprises a distortion device (907, 908), which, when said control signals (710, 309) from the load distributor (703, 304) indicate that the resource unit (902, 903, 303) has not been selected, is arranged for distorting the selected message (706, 308) so that the content of the distorted message according to said protocol will be ignored, the means (906, 404) for supervision of the message reception detecting that the content of the selected message (706, 308) is to be ignored and the resource unit (902, 903, 303) ignoring the content of the message.
9. A system (700, BS2) according to claim 8, characterized in that said protocol comprises an abort sequence, said distortion device (907) being arranged for distorting the selected message (706, 308) so that the means (906, 404) supervising the message reception registers the abort sequence (1002) and interrupts the reception of the selected message (706, 308).
10. A system (700) according to claim 8, characterized in that the messages in said protocol comprise a checksum (505) for detection of distorted

- messages, said distortion device (908) being arranged for distorting the selected message so that the means (906) supervising the message reception, when checking the checksum (505) of the selected message (706), discovers that the message has been distorted.
11. A system (700, BS2) according to claim 1, characterized in that said transmission means (705, 305) comprises individual connections (305) between the load distributor (703, 304) and each respective resource unit (702, 303).
12. A system (700, BS2) according to claim 1, characterized in that the system internal communication network (704, 302) is based on a bus topology.
13. A system (700, BS2) according to claim 1, characterized in that each of the resource units (702, 303) handles at least one communication link (103) for communication with at least one system external unit (MSC1) and that the selected resource unit (702, 303) transmits at least part of the content of the selected message (706, 308) to the system external unit (MSC1) on one of the communication links (103) handled by the selected unit (702, 303).
14. A system (700, BS2) according to claim 13, characterized in that said communication links are X.25 links (103) for communication with said system external unit (MSC1).
15. A method for load distribution in a system (700) of communicating units (701, 702), said system comprising at least one transmitting unit (701), at least one resource group (708) comprising at least two resource units (702), a system internal communication network (704) to which the transmitting unit (701) and the resource units (702) in the resource group (708) are connected and which is intended for transmission of messages (706) from the transmitting unit (701) to the resource units (702) and a load distributor (703) connected to the communication network (704), said method comprising:
- transmission (800) of a message (706) from the transmitting unit, characterized in that the method further comprises:
- registration (801) of the message (706) by each resource unit (702) as a message addressed to that resource unit (702),
- initiation (802) of message reception in all resource units (702) in the resource group (708),
- registration (803) of the message (706) by the load distributor (703),
- selection (804) in the load distributor (703), according to a predetermined rule, of at least one of the resource units (702) for this message,
- indication (805), of which at least one of the resource units (702) has been selected, from the load distributor (703) to the resource units (702),
- performance of predetermined actions (806) in the resource units (702) in connection with the message (706) and in dependence of said indication.
16. A method according to claim 15, characterized in that one and only one of the resource units (702) is selected.
17. A method according to claim 15, characterized in that said rule for the selection of the resource units (702) comprises selecting the resource units (702) cyclically in turn.
18. A method according to claim 15, characterized in that the resource units (702) that have not been selected ignore the content of the message (706).

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19. A method according to claim 15, characterized by performing said indication (805) to the resource units (702) of what resource unit (702) has been selected before any one of the resource units (702) has received the entire message (706). 5
20. A method according to claim 19, characterized by giving said indication (805) to the resource units (702) of what resource unit (702) has been selected, in the form of ignore signals (710) to the resource units (702) that have not been selected (702), the predetermined actions performed in the resource units (702) receiving one of the ignore signals comprising: 10
interruption of the reception of the message (706),
ignorance of the content of the message (706). 15
21. A method according to claim 19, characterized in that said indication (805) to the resource units (702) of which at least one of the resource units (702) has been selected is given in the form of a handling signal (711) to the selected resource unit (702), the resource unit (702) receiving the handling signal (711) using the content of the message (706), while the other resource units (702) decides to ignore the content of the message (706) when the entire message (706) has been received. 20 25
22. A method according to claim 15, characterized in that said indication (805) to the resource units (702) of which at least one of the resource units (702) has been selected is given in the form of both a handling signal (711) to the selected resource unit (702) and ignore signals (710) to the resource units (702) that were not selected, the resource unit (702) receiving the handling signal (711) using the content of the message (706) while the resource units (702) receiving the ignore signals (710) ignore the content of the message (706). 30 35

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23. A method according to claim 15, wherein transmission and reception of messages are performed according to a certain protocol, characterized in that at least one of the resource units (702) that have not been selected is made to ignore the content of the message (706) through distortion of the message (706) so that according to said protocol, the content of the distorted message is to be ignored, said resource unit (702) after detecting the distorted message, ignoring the content of the message (706).
24. A method according to claim 23, characterized in that the protocol used comprises an abort sequence (1002), said at least one of the resource units (902) that have not been selected being made to ignore the content of the message (706) through distortion of the message (706) so that the resource unit (902) will detect the abort sequence (1002) and interrupt the reception of the message (706).
25. A method according to claim 23, characterized in that messages in said protocol comprise a checksum (505) for detection of distorted messages, at least one of the resource units (903) that were not selected being made to ignore the content of the message (706) through distortion of the message (706) so that the resource unit (903) detects, when checking the checksum (505) of the message, that the message has been distorted.
26. A method according to claim 15, characterized in that said predetermined actions performed in the selected resource unit (702, 303) comprise the transmission of at least part of the content of said message (706, 308) to a system external unit (MSC1) on an external communication link (103) handled by the selected resource unit (702, 303).

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